"The slow pale chaos drift west": Depth of Field and *The Crossing* into the "Pure Past" of the American South

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In his analysis of the fragmentation of narrative time in postwar cinema, Deleuze relies on the concepts of virtual time in Bergson and Leibniz: the "pure past" and "incompossible worlds." I explore this line of thought in conjunction with Leibniz's schema of perception in "monads," which involves no outside object but focuses instead on the self in an endeavor to discern the relations that constitute world-memory. The final part of the essay draws the implications of monadic perception for the "post-apocalyptic" world of Cormac McCarthy's Border Trilogy, *which confronts the vagrant orphan characters with an impossibility of self-orientation.*

> Baroque artists know well that hallucination does not feign presence, but that presence is hallucinatory.
> Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold*

> We never sleep so soundly but that we have some feeble and confused sensation, and we should not be awakened by the loudest noise in the world had we no perception of its small beginning.
> Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*

Crystal Image: Fractured Time and the Disorienting Space of Postwar Cinema

Deleuze invokes Leibniz quite extensively in the course of a reflection on what he regards to be a new temporal dynamism emerging in postwar

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cinema. Yet, the overall framework of the analysis of time in the two volumes of *Cinema* draws primarily on Bergson, and concepts borrowed from Leibniz are fitted into this conceptual assemblage without an exploration of the parallels or divergences in the way the virtual and the actual are articulated by these two thinkers. This unpursued path of inquiry nevertheless leaves a gap in the text between the two concepts of time, the Leibnizian and the Bergsonian, in relation to the cinematic image. One way to deal with this gap would be to treat it as an "interval" in the cinematographic sense that Deleuze gives this term when referring to a disjunction between two successive shots that can serve as a locus for the intervention of thought.[1]

One can also note with regard to the way Leibniz is incorporated into *Cinema II* that, while his concept of "incompossible worlds" serves as an important tool in the analysis of the temporal structure of postwar films, the reciprocal relation of this term with the key Leibnizian concept of the "monad" is left unexplored. Given that the monad is constituted primarily through the filtering and deciphering of perceptions, its pertinence would seem to suggest itself for an analysis of what Deleuze calls "pure optical and sound situations" of the new cinema, where action is held hostage in the face of a persistent demand that the image be "read" and "deciphered," a demand that transfers the character to an almost extradiegetic condition of passivity that now becomes his shared condition with the audience (Deleuze, *Cinema II* 18). In this article I begin to explore the implications of introducing the perceptive apparatus of the Leibnizian monad into the context of the "purely optical or sound image" that prevails in postwar cinema just as it manifests itself in literature at least from Romanticism onwards, and that offers no center of action with which viewers/readers can identify, but instead presents them with a scene of "reading" that is indistinguishable from their own. The second half of the discussion turns to the postwar prose of the American author Cormac McCarthy to examine monadic perception as a means for the individual to reconstruct its relation to a world in which a catastrophe that threatens to break out is indistinguishable from one that already dictates the erasure of all its traces.

Although Deleuze regards the defining characteristic of postwar cinema to be the crisis in the representation of time, this crisis results from a breakdown in the character's unmediated relation to space, and the expediency with which he confronts the forces distributed within a milieu, engages them, and eventually transforms the milieu. The inert space of the "action-image" yields its place in the new cinema to an assertion of space as a force that inhibits the character's capacity to respond to the situation at hand. Deleuze defines the resulting release of space from the subordinate role ascribed to it by the narrative as a "crystalline description."

Whereas the "organic description" of narrative cinema represented space as the stage of an action, with "crystalline description" space breaks away from the narrative development and appears in its own right as empty, useless, or disconnected space because the narrative from which it received its continuity has itself been fragmented. Description no longer aims at the truthful representation of its object; rather, the object is created through its description, which is also to say that it is erased in the process. Godard defines this operation succinctly when he says "to describe is to observe mutations" (Deleuze, *Cinema II* 19). The purely optical image of the new cinema demands to be "seen" on the condition that the act of seeing involve a "reading" and "interpretation" of signs and symptoms. In other words, all action is reduced to seeing when there is nothing given to be seen and the seeing function itself undergoes a thorough transformation as when one is called upon to "see" the problem in a situation, or envision an idea. What calls for the function of seeing to be exercised at a higher capacity that renders it "visionary" is the intolerable situation that exhausts the perceptive capacity of the character. The mutations that ensue from this act of seeing affect the self no less than the object under his gaze, a mutual mutation to which impressionist painting from Van Gogh to Cezanne offers an inexhaustible testimony. It may be argued that the "leap-in-place" of this double becoming of the observer and the sight, or the visionary and the vision, has parallels with the "leap" envisioned by Bergson as a necessary step of installing oneself in the "pure past" (Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 57–58; *Cinema II* 99–100).

Given Deleuze's dislike for metaphors, it would be pertinent to ask why he refers to this kind of an image as "crystal." What is it that crystallizes, is locked in, or is condensed in this image? The answer to this question constitutes the point of articulation between the analysis of cinema and Bergson's notion of "duration." To give a very concise definition, Bergsonian duration is an impersonal, non-psychological memory that consists neither of the recollections of a particular subject nor of traces inscribed in a space. For Bergson, any attempt to reconstitute the past from personal memory or traces in matter is to misrecognize the virtual in its particular actualizations. The present moment, where the pure past is contained or "implied" in its most contracted stage, is the only point of contact between a particular subject and "the past in general." The subject can access the "pure past" only when a present image can evoke a virtual one that resides in the past on the basis of a resonance between them. What Bergson refers to as the pure past differs in kind from both the present and the recollection-images of the subject. Habitual perception and habitual memory, which are fastened on the utility of the object and choose only those aspects of it that

are of interest to the subject, cannot serve as a connection to the pure past. The only means of installing oneself in the past in general, for Bergson, is "attentive memory" (Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 68–70). Pure optical and sound situations in cinema facilitate precisely this kind of a memory by placing the crystal image, which condenses the whole of the past in an instant, in touch with the pure past, which subsumes the subject's recollections without being reducible to them (Deleuze, *Cinema II* 44–47).

Just as the breakdown of the narrative gives rise to a new mode of presenting space, the release of time from its subordination to movement leads to a breakdown of the truth regime, according to Deleuze. When the present or the actual moment loses its power of judgment over the past, when it can no longer present itself as the ultimate destiny of the multiple trajectories that are eliminated in the course of actualization, then what results is an unleashing of divergent alternatives for each event in the past. If neo-realist and new wave film plots privilege the figure of the traitor or the forger as a protagonist, as literature has being doing for a long time already, this thematic choice, Deleuze argues, is a direct consequence of the transformation in the temporal structure. Because alternative pasts emerge alongside each other without a criterion of judgment to decide between them, it becomes necessary not only that the traitor figure occupy the protagonist position, but that the narrative as a whole give up any claim to truth and become falsifying. Deleuze finds the paradigmatic example of this new narrative, where the content obeys the dictates of temporal form, in Godard's *Great Scoundrel*, an adaptation of Melville's *Confidence-Man*, a text that plays a decisive role in Deleuze's analysis of Melville's works later on (Deleuze, *Essays* 89). A problem seems to occur, however, in regarding the forger as the quintessential figure of the temporal form peculiar to new cinema in that his firm footing *inside* the actual realm and his obedience to its preconditions renders it ambiguous whether he will not ultimately draw the virtual itself into the cycle of betrayal, thereby conflating world-memory with the actually existing world.

In staging the dynamism of virtual planes, Deleuze also calls in other figures, such as the *autochthon*. The autochthon corresponds to the most expanded plane of the past that Deleuze associates with primordial justice. It is indifferent to any of the mediations interposed between beings and the world, and returns all beings to their innocence to the extent that each belongs to the world (Deleuze, *Cinema II* 115). The virtual plane that has the greatest autonomy from matter is articulated, paradoxically, with the immanent materiality of the Earth in the figure of the autochthon, through a creative appropriation of the Bergsonian model. The result is a Nietzschean affirmation of the world to the greatest extent possible. Here

immanence is attained on condition of utmost deterritorialization, or the greatest indifference with respect to the divisions and oppositions prevailing in the actual world and its state of affairs. It is this primeval justice that Deleuze finds to be at work in a society such as Melville's America, where individuals are related to each other on the basis of an egalitarianism of minor, orphan figures, "a society of brothers" (Deleuze, *Essays* 84). Modern American literature, however, would not cease to testify to the fertile lineage of confidence-men, from Faulkner's Snopes trilogy—a veritably interminable genealogical series—to the monumental figure of the Judge in Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*. Rather than a "reevaluation of values," the con-game of the forger seems to serve the purpose of retribution.

Deleuze argues that, in new cinema, the forger appears not simply to conduct a particular forgery, but to forge the very form of time, mobilizing multiple temporal planes anarchically, availing himself of the means at the disposal of cinematography. The release of time from its subordination to linear flow simultaneously liberates the subject from the judgment of a truth regime, giving rise to the figure of the forger as the representative of a new notion of justice. The falsifying narrative is one of Deleuze's cinematographic answers to the question that he takes over from Bergson and explores in the central chapter of *Cinema II*: "Where are the planes of past located?"

The works of Welles, Robbe-Grillet, and Resnais elucidate the components of this problem for each director in his distinctive way. The question with which Welles is preoccupied is, "How can memory be invoked from the present moment in such a way that one achieves not only a linear vector that goes from an actual- to a recollection-image, but the entire network of associations between multiple layers of the past?" In *Citizen Kane,* Welles offers an image of the coexisting layers, or regions, of the past by assigning each of the various characters from the protagonist's past to a distinct region of it (Deleuze, *Cinema II* 105–107). The coexisting layers are unified around the figure of the protagonist whose past they compose, while the moment of his death, which occasions the act of remembrance, serves as an anchor within the actual that orders temporal layers. The comparison of Welles with Resnais offers a time-image less concerned with the implications of memory for the present than with the movement between or juxtaposition of the planes of the past, or with attaining a layer of greater expansion. Resnais' temporal drama, where the role of characters are taken over by "emotions," the passages between which stimulate thought, is the cinematic instance Deleuze locates to be the closest to Bergson (Deleuze, *Cinema II* 124–125).

The Nietzschean Forger as a Nomad between Incompossible Worlds

After attaining a plane for thought within the temporal dynamics of the cinematic image, the focus on the falsity of the narrative and the imposture of the character in the next chapter strikes a counterpoint. It is as if granting an impermeable autonomy to the virtual and assigning Thought to this autonomous sphere entails the risk of reproducing the metaphysical opposition between the virtual and the actual, Thought and Sense, time and space. The figure of the forger enters the discussion right at this moment when the threat of metaphysical closure arises, and it breaks through that closure by traversing the heterogeneous series of the virtual and the actual at once, making them operate in tandem. Deleuze invokes Nietzsche as a necessary bifurcation in the line that connects himself to Bergson. Yet Bergson does not appear as one of the interlocutors in this chapter ("The Powers of the False"); instead, the comparison is set between the Leibnizian concept of "incompossible" alternatives of the past and the Nietzschean power of the false. It is interesting to note how Deleuze plays three major thinkers against one another across the centuries in order to give full expression to his own argument on time.

In Leibniz's notion of the incompossible alternatives of the past whose coexistence leads not to contradiction, but to *vice-diction*, Deleuze finds a more adequate formulation of coexisting layers of memory than offered by Bergson (Deleuze, *Cinema II* 130–131). His exclusive concern with the irreducibility of time to a dimension of space, particularly in his polemic with the theory of relativism, has led Bergson to conceive of the general past as an autonomous—but also consequently unified—sphere (Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 79–82). Leibniz, in contrast, had already envisioned the autonomy of multiple series of the virtual *alongside* the actual series, without a law of logical noncontradiction either between the elements within a series or between one series and another. In this remarkably counter-intuitional concept of time, consistency is not to be found in the actual state of affairs, nor is it assigned to a virtual sphere that could compensate for the imperfection in the world. On this latter point, Leibnizian thought avoids the problems associated with the Bergsonian pure past. Any means of purging the world of its contradiction is precluded, without, for all that, the world being conflated with what is actual, or losing touch with the virtual. The particular trajectory that history follows is irreversible for Leibniz, but this does not amount to a reduction of world-memory to the sequence of events that have been actualized.

Deleuze's argument proceeds on the basis of affirming the heterogeneous pasts in Leibniz over the connotations of a transcendent unity of

Time in the Bergsonian "duration." The problem arises for Deleuze when Leibniz ultimately subordinates this heterogeneity to the principle of the *compossiblity* of the world, which appears to be an unquestionable justification of the world as it is actualized by God. Such a conclusion, however, is to take Leibniz at his word. To take the "existing world" in this statement as an accomplished fact is to overlook the openness to the virtual that is constitutive of the Leibnizian "best of all possible worlds." The notion of "incompossible worlds" makes room for the coexistence of heterogeneity, or what Deleuze refers to as "vice-diction," as distinct from the dialectical notion of contradiction. If the existing world is judged to be "the best," this is not a logical conclusion reached on the basis of experience; on the contrary, the world is judged to be the best against logic and good sense, counter-intuitively, as it were, and only on the basis of its continuous and deferred relation to the virtual. To put it otherwise, the principle of "vice-diction" is at work *inside* the compossible world no less than it is between incompossible worlds. The mark of vice-diction at the heart of the compossible world is inscribed by the monad. Although it is the building block of the world, the monad cannot be said to reside fully inside it, but rather on a threshold between it and the infinite virtual series even as it is grounded in the actual with respect to its material body. The monad, each individual monad, acts as an operator articulating the virtual and the actual series, and finds its reason for existence in this articulation.

It would seem plausible to posit the monad as a figure of the new temporal regime of postwar cinema and a counterpart to the forger. The first distinctive feature of the monad is that not any exterior object but *the virtual as such* constitutes its field of perception. In the monad perception does not occur between a subject and an object, nor is it an inter-subjective relation (Deleuze, *Fold* 93–95).[2] Perception does not fit any communicational schema because what is perceived are not stimuli that emanate from material bodies, but the infinite series of virtual relations that constitute the world precisely to the same extent that they constitute the monad itself.

The two questions that occupy Deleuze from *Bergsonism* to *Cinema II*, "where do the planes of past reside?" and, "how to install oneself in the general, impersonal past?" find an extraordinary answer in Leibniz. A monad—that is, an individual body—has an unmediated relation to the entire virtual series (of time) to the extent that it is itself the actualization of a limited segment of this series. The monad clearly expresses—that is to say, *actualizes*—a finite number of the infinite relations constituting the world, all the while containing the entire series *within* itself as "implicated" or "enveloped." It has been seen that for Bergson expanding the focus of

perception from the present moment towards "world-memory" requires a "leap" on the part of the subject. For the monad, the world-memory is not a sphere distinct from the perceptions of the individual, but forms their continuous focus. This continuity is maintained on condition of an isolation from the surrounding milieu. The territory of the monadic individual is minimized to its own body, which moreover has been insulated from the perturbations of the outside world. The monad is thus perpetually poised between the infinite virtual series and the actual, without creating what Deleuze calls a "disjunctive synthesis" out of them, as does the forger, but sustaining an openness to the virtual while remaining rooted within the actual milieu.[3]

There are two conditions here that feed upon each other: *isolation* in space and *continuity* of perception. These two conditions prove to be even more strictly reciprocal when the spatial components of the monad are examined more closely. What Leibniz refers to as "the fold," or as an organic membrane that is interposed between the monad and the virtual multiplicity, acts as a screen that filters the monad's perceptions. In the course of progressive perceptions, the fold continually weaves upon itself; in other words, that which is perceived folds back upon and remolds the screen that filters perception (Deleuze, *Fold* 90–93). Progressive clarity of perceptions thereby accumulates to ensure the continuity of perception against potential interruptions from the actual world. This continuity of the monad's relation to world-memory has its precondition in the infinity of the virtual series that the monad strives to grasp and can only do so incrementally. Isolation, focus on the self and continuity define a structure that one can refer to as an *apprenticeship in perception*—more precisely, as a *self-apprenticeship*, in much the same way that one speaks of "self-mastery."

The continuity of perceptive effort and isolation from inter-subjective exchange characterize Leibnizian perception as an apprenticeship, posing a marked counterpoint to the figures of forgery, betrayal, and a "leap" that in Deleuze's account occupy the place of the paradoxical articulation of the actual and the virtual. For the baroque philosopher, the depth of field as a way of ordering space is not given within an actual milieu, nor can it come about by a fortuitous "leap" of memory, which for Deleuze constitutes the primary *coup* of articulation between the actual and the virtual image. In *Monadology*, the depth of field—or, more precisely, the deepening of the field—requires an endless training of the mind as well as of the perceptive apparatus. This temporality prescribed by the very functioning of the perceptive apparatus has implications for narrative time in film and prose: What kind of temporality must be adopted in viewing/reading so that the viewer/reader can grasp temporal multiplicity? The articulation between the actual

and the virtual depends on a sustained effort of the self to perceive, on which the very viability of the self depends. This effort is at the same time the only bulwark against the subsumption of the virtual by the actual, a risk to which the figure of the forger abandons the narrative without recourse.

Self-Apprenticeship in Perception in a World of Timeless Catastrophe

If perception resembles apprenticeship, it is because the monad starts from the condition of darkness in which it is solicited by an infinity of minute stimuli that do not present any unity. For Leibniz, there are no given objects of perception; they are constructed only through the process of perception. Portraits by Baroque painters such as Holbein, Tintoretto, and Rembrandt stage this process where the figure is not there to begin with, but takes time to emerge, and the light that oozes into the enclosed space of the monad fetches the figure not so much from the background darkness as from a time non-synchronous with the viewer's present. The light does not suffuse the space to such an extent that the gap of time could be covered up and the figure delivered to the viewer's present. Suspended on the threshold of darkness, the figure rather persists within a temporality of its own, while the hiatus between the two presents asserts itself as the inevitable condition for their communication. Cinema's exploration with the depth of field, particularly the neo-expressionist layering of temporal planes within a single shot, as in Lang, Welles, or Resnais, has its lineage in Baroque painting. It may be less obvious how this temporal device, which relies on enclosure, may apply to a contemporary pastiche of the American Western, a genre that has introduced the establishing shot with its limitless expansion of a panoramic landscape to cinema audiences the world over. In making my case for the coupling of the monadic enclosure with the road narrative, I draw support from the other, seemingly contrasting principle of Baroque art, which posits the unobstructed extension of interior space to the exterior on a continuous line that makes the body pass into the elements, the sculpture pass into the architecture, and thence to the surrounding city and the country. Hermeticism of the monad and the continuous line comprise not only two reciprocal traits of Baroque art, but often merge in the work of the same artist (Deleuze, *Fold* 124–126).

The literary equivalent of the establishing shot is the canvas on which Cormac McCarthy starts his revisitation of the Western. Film adaptations of McCarthy's novels, particularly *No Country for Old Men*, confirm how closely the author observes the protocols of the establishing shot, almost

to the point of making the audience forget that they are not viewing an original Western, but rather a self-conscious pastiche on the part of the author, who, instead of starting from a *tabula rasa*, chooses to retouch this vast and obsolete panorama which had been the *tabula rasa* for its inventors, its "founders." Very soon, the readers/viewers begin to have a presentiment that, far from unfurling the landscape to the masterful gaze of the character (hence also to that of the viewer) and thereby launching them in full confidence into the uncharted land, the image offers a landscape that engulfs the protagonist, who traverses it in a kind of isolation that has nothing in common with the illustrious solitude that frames and foregrounds the Western hero. The somberness that pervades the vision of and movement over the land is suggestive of a world that one could say exists nowhere outside the individuals that perceive it, each in his manner. Shrunk to the point of vanishing in the landscape, the figures in the *Border Trilogy* have a likewise disproportionate relation to the mountain country extending indefinitely around them without the support of a law with which to extract a habitable, navigable world from it.

The role that landscape plays in the narrative is by no means reducible to a pastiche of the Western, even though it includes that role. The character has a vital relation to the landscape. Each time the threshold of the valley known to be home is crossed, and the "Animas Peaks" is referred to by name, all of the characters in the scene, including the horses, appear to be recharged, straightening their bodies and quickening their pace. Yet, the land is no longer the medium on which the character can stake a territory for himself and realize his potentials. The little luminous spot pertaining to the character is cropped from the somber landscape and recedes back to it as to an infinite resource upon which the nomadic orphans of the *Crossing* depend for survival. Orphanage does not necessarily indicate an actual absence of family ties, but rather a structure or a mode of being in the world that determines the protagonist's relation to his surroundings, one more cropping device that fortifies the monad's autonomy. The unnamed protagonist in the opening scene of the *Crossing* moves with the circumspect pace of such an orphan nomad, enclosed within the self-sufficient space defined by the body of his horse, the objects that fill its saddlebags, and among them his baby brother attached to the bow of the saddle, a minimal world unto itself and getting to know itself as the boy names the Earthly creatures and bodies by which they pass one by one in both languages he knows, for the sake of the observing baby. The narrator does not try to conceal the clues of his parents' presence, but this information hardly contradicts the monad's isolation, which imposes an absolute perspective upon what is being seen.

The monad's relation to the surrounding indicates from the outset that the wherewithal necessary to measure the distance between the self and the world, and to relate the one to the other, has been lost. Orphanage erupts in midst of the normative function of mimesis, where the father is supposed to set the natural and primary model for the son to emulate: In the scene where young Billy is taken along on an initiation trip by his father, the very process of mimesis, whose function is to mediate between the self and the world, attests to the hiatus that separates not only the monad from the world but the two monads, the son and the father, from each other. The act of initiation concerns catching a wolf that had been preying on the family's and the neighbors' cattle. But the rite has to take place in the absence of the evasive animal that has to be killed, or at least captured. Billy watches the unerring sequence of movements with which his father prepares the trap that he dedicates to the absent antagonist.

> He held the trap up and eyed the notch in the pan while he backed off one screw and adjusted the trigger. Crouched in the broken shadow with the sun at his back and holding the trap at eyelevel against the morning sky he looked to be truing some older, some subtler instrument. Astrolabe or sextant. Like a man bent at fixing himself someway in the world. Bent on trying by arc or by chord the space between his being and the world that was. If there be such space. If it be knowable. (22)

Futility of the endeavor amid overwhelming surroundings and perseverance in the effort to define a relation with it are the reciprocal conditions of the individual. The landscape does not offer any objects for confrontation, but only traces that require a long training before one can gather them into a meaningful whole. The initiation process dissolves into the indeterminacy of the landscape on the side of the object, but it also dissolves the model to be emulated, himself a helpless figure in the face of elusive traces.

Unobstructed views of the *sierra* measure the progress of the protagonist's journey, but it is clear from the outset that space can no longer be treated in the ordinary way as the medium of confrontations between subjects and objects, a medium for the expansion or retreat of territories. The pursuit of the object depends rather on the reading of traces, which implies the absence of the object, hence also a time outside the present towards which the object withdraws. After several rounds of practicing the traps with his father, Billy is sent in pursuit of the wolf on his own.

> He stood down into the snow and dropped the reins and squatted and thumbed back the brim of his hat. In the floors of the little wells she'd stoven in the snow lay her perfect prints. The broad forefoot. The narrow hind. The sometime drag-

mark of her dugs or the place where she'd put her nose. He closed his eyes and tried to see her and others of her kind, wolves and ghosts of wolves running in the whiteness of that high world as perfect to their use as if their counsel had been sought in the devising of it […] He followed her all day. He never saw her. Once he rode her up out of a bed in a windbreak thicket on the south slope where she'd slept in the sun. Or thought he rode her up […] whether the bed was warm from her or from the sun he was in no way sure. (31–32)

With the object absent, perception calls on memory and imagination, causing the process to partake of an aesthetic figuration, a storytelling function, which necessarily opens onto multiplicity. The trace proliferates and already begins to destabilize the task in which the young initiate was expected to relay his father. The responsibility, which mimetic training intended to pass on, dissolves into an altogether different apprenticeship pursued in solitude, a self-apprenticeship in the perception of the world. The impossibility of fixing the object transforms the perceptive schema into a scene of writing in which the subject finds himself inevitably implicated. In reading the signs, one cannot help leaving traces of his own on the surface that one reads, due to the involvement of his imagination if for no other reason. Perception through the trace is not the exclusive domain of the subject. The signs "get read" on the other side as well without one meeting the other interpreter. It is as if the landscape itself *reads* what it has retained as a recording surface. Apprenticeship in perception thus proceeds without a role model or an object of perception. One acquires clearer perceptions only by inscribing himself simultaneously in the infinite archive.

With Billy's first exercise in "reading," the wolf splits from being the prey that his father has charged him with catching, and multiplies into "wolves and ghosts of wolves" that inhabit a world onto themselves. Just as the object multiplies, so does the role model. Already more than a duplicate of his father, and inclined towards a more profound commitment required from an apprentice in reading traces, Billy deserts the orbit of his family in search of a hunter renowned throughout the region. He cannot locate the mysterious hunter, but reaches as far as his acolyte, an old Hispanic man in reclusion. The key advice he manages to extract in a language he barely understands and in a speech barely distinguishable from a wheeze confirms the evasiveness of the object of Billy's pursuit, if not its utter absence. "You want to catch this wolf, the old man said. Maybe you want the skin so you can get some money […] If you want to see it you have to see it in its own ground. If you catch it you lose it […] The wolf is made the way the world is made. You cannot touch the world. You cannot hold it in your hands for it is made of breath only" (46). The counsel confirms that the pursuit has to proceed in the absence of object and reiterates

the futility of searching either for the object or for the aid of any masters. His account frequently interrupted with the admission, "Yo no sé nada," reminds Billy that the only help he can provide is to put him in a more intimate relation to himself—or, in a Southern manner of speaking, "hisself." The meeting with the old man, the opaque medium of the conversation that switches between English and Spanish at every turn in a way that not only eludes the reader but tests the comprehension of the protagonist alike, and would hardly count as "exchange" otherwise, because it is about the turn to nothingness of that which is exchanged—this conversation lays the schema for all the encounters that await the protagonist down the road. There is little reason to assume that this series of narrators, each of whom is isolated in different parts of the landscape like autochthonous beings, is any more accessible in their monologue performances than the evasive beast whom Billy had to conjure up from her traces.

In the monadic constitution of the world, the principle of non-communication between monads prevails, except insofar as each one partakes in the infinite series of traces by inscribing itself therein or effacing itself thereof. The stories offered by consecutive narrators respect the rule of self-apprenticeship even as they instruct the orphan traveler. All of them are stories of survival and perseverance in the face of a mighty obscure blow—the Mexican war of 1910, the earthquake of 1887—that has destroyed the storyteller's habitual relation to the world, leaving him to survive under circumstances he can no longer discern. The narrators accept no commentary from the listener; the monologue in which they present the story is the only possible form to speak about an event that entails the rupture of relation. The telling does not even need the solicitation of a listener, since the narrator "must talk to himself in the absence of any godsent ear from the outer world" (143). In their automatism and self-reflexivity, the stories add themselves to the assemblage of monads that make up the world in which the protagonist moves about, even as they are interpretations of that world. They join up with the other traces on the recording surface of the Earth to enhance the power of discernment and therefore gradually the "capacity for a free act" of he who reads them.[4]

As a recording surface, the landscape not only retains the memory of all movement across it, but has the capacity moreover to conjure up visions and movements that exceed reality. During a night camp on the Mexican side, where Billy and his brother, who accompanies him in the search for the family's stolen horses, constitute an easy target in a land whose conventions they do not know, the landscape begins to crop up hallucinatory figures that only add to the brothers' disquiet.

… they watched across the flats where something was articulating in the sunrise far out on the steelcolored clay of the playa. After a while they could see that it was a rider. He was perhaps a mile out and he approached in a series of thin and trembling images which in those places where the footground was flooded would suddenly augment in their length and draw up again so that the rider appeared to advance and recede and advance again […] The rider advanced over the shallow standing water and the water displaced under the hooves of the horse brightened in the light and vanished instantly like lead dishing in a vat […] He looked at them and he looked back across the playa and leaned and spat and looked at them again. You aint who I thought you was, he said […] I seen your reflection. Certain times you can see things out on a playa that's too far to see. Some of the boys claimed you all was mirage but Mr. Boruff knowed you wasn't. He studies this country. He knows what's in it and what aint in it. So do I. (173–175)

The arrangement of bodies in space defies perspective and calls for perception in depth. Proximities and distances obey different laws in depth, which has parallels with the way memory is organized. As Bergson says, proximities and distances in memory do not compare to those of extension, but are ordered in the form of a *virtual coexistence* of degrees of intensity (Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 74–75). The image perceived in depth—which is not reducible to the cinematic depth of field although the latter is a derivative of it—begets a virtual component, or rather a virtual double, such that it pivots on the boundary between the real and the imaginary, emerging within the present only to topple back to the (impersonal) past. There is every reason to assume that this logic of apparition and efface-ment of figures applies just as well to the events of which the protagonist comes to know from the hermetic narrators strewn over the landscape. The distance and connections between these historical events—unlike the distance between the narrators who tell them—operates according to a logic that exceeds the order of succession in which they appear in the course of the *Crossing*, a logic that resembles a cross-stitching.

In a landscape where in place of objects one pursues traces, and in place of characters, one runs into stories told in monologue, in what fash-ion would one encounter an event? If, as the Indian chief advises Billy, the world "seemed a place which contained men [but] it was in reality a place contained within them," would one experience an event only in its infinite repercussions that would not fail to reach the monadic self insofar as he is implicated in the recording surface of the world?

From the time Billy loses the ephemeral and fragile object of desire, the untouchable snowflake-wolf, until the time he learns that his parents have been assailed and murdered, and he decides to take up a fight joined by his brother to retrieve the family's stolen horses—in this interval of mourn-ing and recovery, his journey takes him from one storyteller to the next in

lieu of any heroic encounters or actions. As "first-hand accounts" of some major destruction whose effects still resonate on the landscape, these stories have the lure of an encounter with the real for the young orphan whose desire for just such an encounter forms the motive of his journey. The survivors' accounts, however, testify to one common fact: that the narrator is someone that has missed the event and that his failure is the condition for the appearance of the story. The self-enclosed monologue has no wisdom to offer to the passerby except that the event can neither be sought nor encountered, and yet that its repercussions propagate without fail on the recording surface of the world where the self, as one of its constituent monads, cannot fail to receive them. The proposition that one can never coincide with the event thus has as its corollary that one can never avoid the event, even though one may pass on it in oblivion. The stories encountered on the journey only indicate to the traveler the direction back to an apprenticeship in reading and sharpening of perceptions. As another monadic narrator, the blind survivor of the Mexican Revolution, tells Billy, "most men in their lives [are] like the carpenter whose work went so slowly for the dullness of his tools that he had not time to sharpen them" (292).

Distinct perception for Leibniz has its roots in obscurity, as in stupor, swoon, or half-wakefulness. The infinite series in which the world is articulated never ceases in its agitations and these never fail to reach down to the monadic self in "minute perceptions" prior to the self's ability to grasp them, point out the problem, and name it. This is why ideas take time for Leibniz. Against Locke, who takes his departure from the mind as a blank surface, he contends that:

> There are at all times an infinite number of perceptions in us, though without apperception and without reflection […] These minute perceptions are therefore more efficacious in their consequences than we think. They constitute that indefinable something, those tastes, those images of the qualities of the senses, clear in the mass but confused in the parts, those impressions which surrounding bodies make on us, which include the infinite, that link which connects every being with all the rest of the universe. (Leibniz, *New Essays* 154)

Billy's crossing of the vast mountain ranges of the American south is a chase after the event, after the source of the agitations that reach down to solicit him in his unsuspecting adolescent's sleep at the beginning of the novel. Such faint sound-images, barely perceptible changes in atmospheric pressure, or a fall or rise in temperature may fall upon a monad too reluctant to inquire about them, or they may chance upon what Leibniz calls a "reflexive monad" that falls in the tracks of the event without delay. For

all his vigilance, reflexivity, and apprenticeship in the reading of traces, Billy will find out that he has passed on the event in utter oblivion, as when his family home is raided by an Indian tribe that kills both his parents. He finds he has fallen behind the event when without warning his wounded brother leaves the *hacienda* where they have been put up, to join the ranks of Mexican fighters and thence to be martyred on a day that will remain undated for Billy. Or again, when, in a world-weary state, he crosses the border back to his "native land" to be alerted by the border guard: "Hell fire, boy. This country is at war" (333). Or again, when his repeated attempts at signing up to fight in World War II are rejected by military offices in three separate states. It is when he finally returns in consummate despondency to the only place that has a sense of home for him, the Animas Valley, that the event will finally catch up with the protagonist. It comes to pass during one of those lapses, while, after many nights on the road, Billy is sound asleep. One can nonetheless presume, with Leibniz, that no sleep is profound enough to keep out the slivers of what stirs in the night. It would not be implausible to assume, for instance, that having dismissed the wounded stray dog from the abandoned shack into the rainy night in order to make himself more comfortable there, Billy is clad in a sleep not entirely immune to pangs of guilt. He nonetheless sleeps through till noontime. Or so he thinks when, woken up by the uncomfortable heat, he sees the flaring and fading of light that "stencils" the shadow of the bare window frames upon the opposite wall. Habitual memory, that the day follows the night, is always prone to illusion, Bergson says. To think one has an immediate grasp of the referent, knows the morning from the first light of dawn, leads one to miss the miniscule but abundant traces, Leibniz cautions, which unmistakably reach one's cave and the articulation of which only can yield a distinct image of the event. The light that suddenly flares up in the Animas Valley on this inaugural morning does not endure to illuminate the nomad's monad, but plunges him, with the reader alongside, back into total obscurity.

OPOMBE

[1] The place where Deleuze explicitly deals with the resonance and divergence between Leibniz and Bergson is the fifth chapter of *The Fold*, where he maintains that the two philosophers have a striking parallel, "the same conception of the inflections of the soul, the same requirement of inherence or inclusion as a condition of the free act, the same description of the free act as that which expresses the self" (72). For an exploration of these parallels, Deleuze refers the reader to Bergson's *Essai sur les données immediate de la conscience*.

[2] Étienne Balibar mentions that the term "inter-subjective" originates in the work of Husserl, who borrows it from Leibniz. See "Spinoza, from Individuality to Transindividu-

ality." Although Husserl's particular way of developing the concept from Leibniz needs closer examination, I do not see any premises in monadology that could agree with an inter-subjective system, not least because the "subjects" in question—if the monads can be termed such—are each incomplete entities between which the communication can only take place through the mediation of the entire infinite virtual series.

³ Deleuze develops the concept of "disjunctive synthesis" of difference in *Difference and Repetition* and uses it to frame his reading of Lewis Carroll's work in *The Logic of Sense*.

⁴ Clarity of perceptions enhances one's power of conducting a "free act" for Leibniz. See, for example, *New Essays* 211.

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»Drsenje počasnega bledega kaosa proti zahodu«: globina polja in *Prečkanje* v »čisto preteklost« ameriškega juga

Ključne besede: literatura in film / naratologija / pripovedni čas / virtualni čas / preteklost / nesomožni svetovi / monada / Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm / Bergson, Henri / Deleuze, Gilles / ameriška književnost / McCarthy, Cormac

Napetost med opisom in pripovedjo je v literaturo vnašala ustvarjalno dinamiko vse od časov njenih intimnih odnosov z impresionističnim slikarstvom do visoko modernih eksperimentov, ki so sledili razpadu linearnega časa. Ko se je povojna kinematografija soočila z nezmožnostjo predstavljanja dogodkov v enotnem časovnem okvirju, so literarni predhodniki ta problem že poznali. V *Cinema II* Gilles Deleuze trdi, da je fragmentacija narativnega časa povzročila nov način nanašanja na prostor in opise prostora osvobodila njihove podrejenosti dogajanju. Iz tega izhajajoča »podoba-kristal«, ki je izvzeta iz dogajalnega toka, se tako po novem zmore nanašati in navezovati na časovnosti, ki so tuje sedanjiku lika/gledalca, heterogene in jih ni preprosto umestiti v preteklost. Pri analiziranju te nove podobe časa se Deleuze opira na dva koncepta virtualnega časa, ki ju najde v delih Bergsona oziroma Leibniza: »čisto preteklost« in »nesomožne svetove« (incompossible worlds). Artikulacija teh dveh konceptov poteka preko obvoza k Nietzscheju, od katerega si Deleuze sposodi

koncept »ponarejevalca« kot paradigmatske figure razcepljujoče časovnosti. Ko se sprašujem, kaj Deleuzovo zatekanje k temu liku prekrije, se vrnem na mesto, kjer je Deleuze začel raziskovati Leibnizove »nesomožne svetove« v povezavi z njegovo shemo zaznavanja skozi monade, ki ne vključuje zunanjih predmetov, temveč se osredinja nase, da bi tako lahko razločilo odnose, ki sestavljajo svet-spomin. V zadnjem delu prispevka so izpostavljeni pomen in implikacije monadnega zaznavanja za to, kar imamo za »post-apokaliptični« svet v leposlovju Cormaca McCarhyja: svet, v katerem se tavajoči, osiroteli liki soočajo s svojo nezmožnostjo orientiranja v pokrajini, ki je – svetovnemu občinstvu vesternov nekoč dobro poznana kot brezmejna in plodna prst za samorealizacijo – postala rezervat nebrzdane grožnje uničenja; spominjanja in slutenj tega uničenja pa med seboj ni več mogoče razločiti.

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